

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 ICAE-00
INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 SSM-03 NEAE-00 ACDA-12
AID-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00 HA-05 /099 W
-----128565 051858Z /61

O R 051650Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2398
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USMISSION SINAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 4578

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IS
SUBJECT: THE "PEACE NOW" MOVEMENT

REF: TEL AVIV 4453

1. SUMMARY: THE "PEACE NOW" MOVEMENT IS THE FIRST ORGANIZED, NON-PARTISAN EXPRESSION OF GROWING PUBLIC DISCONTENT WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S FOREIGN POLICY. NOTWITHSTANDING FOREIGN PRESS ACCOUNTS THIS IS NOT THE KIND OF CAMPAIGN SUPPORTED BY MASS OPINION, WHICH SEEKS TO AND EVENTUALLY MAY SUCCEED IN BRINGING DOWN THE GOVERNMENT. AS OF NOW, THIS IS A RESPONSIBLE, MODERATE CAMPAIGN TO EXPRESS THE CONCERNS OF AN IMPRESSIVE BUT LIMITED SEGMENT OF THE ISRAELI PUBLIC. IT IS THE VEHICLE OF PUBLIC EXPRESSION
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RATHER THAN THE CATALYST OF PUBLIC OPINION. IT MAY, HOWEVER, BE TRANSFORMED INTO THE LATTER, AS SIGNS OF POLARIZATION APPEAR. END SUMMARY

2. IT IS OUR IMPRESSION THAT THE WEEKEND "PEACE NOW" RALLY HAD GREATER IMMEDIATE IMPACT ON FOREIGN THAN ON ISRAELI MEDIA AND PUBLIC OPINION. THE IMPORTANCE OF

THE WELL-ATTENDED TEL AVIV DEMONSTRATION--SO FAR THE CENTERPIECE OF THE "PEACE NOW" CAMPAIGN--CANNOT BE DISCOUNTED, BUT IT MUST BE UNDERSTOOD WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ISRAELI POLITICAL AND SOCIAL RELATIONS.

3. THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF FRUSTRATION AND DIS-APPOINTMENT IN ISRAEL OVER LACK OF PROGRESS TOWARDS A PEACE SETTLEMENT. UNTIL RECENTLY, HOWEVER, CONSENSUAL JUDGMENT HELD THAT THE OBSTACLES TO PEACE WERE OF AN "OBJECTIVE" NATURE OR THE RESULT OF EGYPTIAN OBSTRUCTIONISM AND/OR AMERICAN MISSTEPS. EVEN BEGIN'S POLITICAL OPPONENTS--WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE EXTREME RIGHT AND LEFT--ENGAGED IN ONLY THE MOST "RESPONSIBLE," RESTRAINED CRITICISM, CONCENTRATING ON TACTICAL DETAILS RATHER THAN ATTITUDINAL OBSTRUCTIONS AND IDEOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS. ONLY NOW IS THE MAINSTREAM ISRAELI BEGINNING TO SPEAK OUT--IN LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, IN GUEST NEWSPAPER COLUMNS, IN SPEECHES TO NON-POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND IN TELEVISION INTERVIEWS. AN EXAMPLE IS AN OPEN LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER BEGIN FROM DR. YITZHAK SHAPIRA, ONE OF ISRAEL'S LEADING EDUCATORS AND THE PRINCIPAL OF HAIFA'S ELITE REALI SCHOOL, WHICH IS PROMINENTLY PLACED IN HAARETZ AND MAARIV AND WHICH CALLS IN MORE MODERATE AND REASONED TONES FOR GREATER FOREIGN POLICY FLEXIBILITY.

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4. "PEACE NOW" (THE SLOGAN OF THE TEL AVIV RALLY BY NOW DENOTES THE MOVEMENT WHICH GREW OUT OF THE RESERVISTS' LETTER) DERIVES ITS SUPPORT FROM THOSE WHO, LIKE DR SHAPIRA, FEEL IT A PUBLIC DUTY TO EXPRESS UNEASE WITH FOREIGN POLICY DIRECTIONS. "PEACE NOW" IS THUS SYMPTOMATIC OF POPULAR DISCONTENT; IT IS NOT YET A CATALYST OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT OPINION OR ACTION.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 4578

5. AT THIS STAGE "PEACE NOW" BEARS BOTH THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE FASTIDIOUS MODERATE MOVEMENT WHICH SEEKS TO INFLUENCE GOVERNMENT POLICY THROUGH PUBLIC ARTICULATIONS OF A WELL REASONED CRITIQUE. (SOME OBSERVERS HAVE NOTED A PARALLEL TO THE FIRST RESTRAINED ANTI-WAR STIRRINGS IN THE U.S. IN THE MID 1960S.) ONE THE ONE HAND ITS ESTABLISHED COLORATION PRE-EMPTS CHARGES OF WILD OR UNPATRIOTIC RAVINGS OF FRINGE ELEMENTS. ON THE OTHER HAND THIS KIND OF EXERCISE OF POLITICALLY CONSCIOUS ELEMENTS CAN BE DISMISSED AS ELITIST AND SCARCELY REPRESENTATIVE OF BROAD POPULAR OPINION. THUS, LIKUD SPOKESMAN--EVINCING UNUSUAL INTEREST IN DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS--ARE EAGERLY POINTING OUT THAT ATTENDEES FOR SATURDAY'S RALLY WERE OVERWHELMINGLY ASHKENASI.
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6. IN OUR VIEW THE "PEACE NOW" EXPRESSES RISING DISCONTENT AMONG A BROAD SEGMENT OF THE ISRAELI POPULACE. THOSE INVOLVED IN THIS MOVEMENT--AND THOSE WHOM IT CAN BE CREDITED WITH REPRESENTING--ARE LARGELY MIDDLE CLASS ASHKENASI, MANY OF THEM YOUNG PROFESSIONALS OR KIBBUTZNIKS WHO IDENTIFY WITH THE TRADITIONAL LABOR ZIONIST VALUES AND MAY HAVE VOTED FOR THE DMC IN THE LAST ELECTION. THIS MOVEMENT IS THE ONLY ORGANIZED EXPRESSION OF PUBLIC DISCONTENT WITH BEGIN'S FOREIGN POLICY; IT IS NOT A PARTISAN EXERCISE NOTWITHSTANDING MAPAM'S EARLY

AND STILL UNPUBLICIZED CONNECTION. "PEACE NOW"
MAY WELL BECOME OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS THE VEHICLE
FOR ANTI-GOVERNMENT EXPRESSION WHICH BECOMES AN
INDEPENDENT FORCE--A CATALYST--IN CREATING AND
BROADENING ANTI-BEGIN PUBLIC SENTIMENT. IT HAS
NOT YET, HOWEVER, BEEN SO TRANSFORMED.

7. LIKUD SOURCES INFORM US THAT HERUT IS ORGANIZING
A MASS RALLY IN SUPPORT OF BEGIN. EHRLICH HAS REFUSED
TO RETRACT HIS "PUTSCH" CHARACTERIZATION OF SATURDAY'S
DEMONSTRATION WHICH HAS ENGERED MANY NEUTRAL
OBSERVERS. WE MAY BE WITNESSING THE BEGINNINGS
OF A POLARIZATION OF OPINION, AS "PEACE NOW" CON-
TINUES TO CAPTURE PUBLIC ATTENTION WITH STEPPED UP
ACTIVITY.
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